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THE ADVENTURES OF THOMAS JEFFERSON SNODGRASS

THE ADVENTURES OF THOMAS JEFFERSON SNODGRASS

[MARK TWAIN]
Samuel Langhorne Clemens

Edited by CHARLES HONCE, *with a Foreword by* VINCENT STARRETT, *and a Note on "A Celebrated Village Idiot" by* JAMES O'DONNELL BENNETT

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THE ADVENTURES OF
THOMAS JEFFERSON SNODGRASS

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No......

FOREWORD

When a great typewriter has been stilled or a great pen has been laid aside forever, strange literary skeletons emerge from trunk and closet and from the dusty files of forgotten journals. They are not always gruesome apparitions. Sometimes they are quite amiable and friendly things. Sometimes they are even important, although usually they are not. For the most part, they are of two classifications: either they are early articulations, conveniently forgotten by their author, or they are unfinished or unworthy fragments charitably overlooked by their author's literary executor.

Still, the slightest word of an unique personality is not without its interest. It may have no literary or philosophical value, and

yet be of very genuine biographical and bibliographical importance. The gathering of suppressed or forgotten chips from a great man's workshop is a pious undertaking understood and appreciated at least by collectors, and it is primarily for collectors that such volumes as the present one are issued. If it is not exactly buried treasure that the diligence of Mr. Charles Honce has unearthed, a small but authentic contribution, at any rate, has been made to the history of the beginnings of a genius, and another volume has been added to the bibliography of Mark Twain. There is a long gulf between the "peaceable stranger" of the Snodgrass letters and the "Mysterious Stranger" of Clemens' apogee; but it is sufficiently interesting to be able to illustrate, by so early an example, the distance between the comic-strip humor of Twain's boyhood and the bitter satire of his age.

FOREWORD

The Snodgrass letters, it may be admitted, are not particularly funny. They illustrate the sense of humor that, to this day, finds the utmost in hilarity in a picture of a man falling off a wagon and saying "Wow!" Arguing from them one would never predict "The Mysterious Stranger." One would not even predict "Tom Sawyer." But one might predict, say, an "Innocents Abroad," and do the latter work no particular injustice. In their day, and in Keokuk, Iowa, probably the Snodgrass letters were very funny indeed. Does anyone, to-day, other than an occasional high-school boy, find humor in "Innocents Abroad" or in "Following the Equator?" One fears that many do.

But the Snodgrass letters are the work of the boy Sam Clemens, later to become Mark Twain, a large figure in American letters, and as such they are deserving of their new

type and of their appearance in fresh and handsome dress.

In some museum or other, in Havana, if memory serves, there are, according to the early Clemens himself, two skulls of Christopher Columbus—"one when he was a boy and one when he was a man." To revert to one's original figure of speech, there are a number of skeletons of Mark Twain in the world. The present one may be regarded as "one when he was a boy." It is, of course, a museum piece, and you may take it or leave it. That is, you may look at it or move on to another case. There are other pieces in the museum.

VINCENT STARRETT

INTRODUCTION

This little book contains an interesting and authentic bit of Americana. It holds what may be considered the first intentional essay in the role of authorship of Samuel Langhorne Clemens. The better known pseudonym was an invention of the still misty future when the following three travel letters appeared in the Keokuk (Iowa) Saturday Post a life-time ago.

While there are records of some earlier attempts from the pen of the humorist—a few contributions to his brother's newspaper at Hannibal, Mo., and a couple of anecdotes sent to the Philadelphia Saturday Evening Post—written between the ages of 13 and 18—these have never been identified. The three sketches gathered in this volume are

the earliest work of Mark Twain that has been preserved and are, incidentally, the first for which he received pay. The Sam Clemens of twenty, who wrote these letters, is not the Mark Twain of later years; yet this early work has guts and gusto, a robust and broad humor, and a hint of the particular brand of Twain exaggeration that was later to make him famous. Crude though it may be, it possesses a vitality that is not to be denied.

The existence of two of these three articles, published in the Saturday Post and the Daily Post, late in 1856 and early in 1857, was known. Mr. Paine, in his life of Mark Twain, mentions two of them. He obtained his information from Thomas Rees, publisher of the Springfield (Illinois) State Register, and a son of the publisher of the old Keokuk Post. By diligent search, the present editor has unearthed a third. There

may be others. None is included in Twain's collected work. That is not the place for them. Their place is in a volume such as this, where those friends of Mark Twain who care to do so may find his first preserved work and, reading, ponder the unutterable gulf that separates the colloquial Snodgrass from the white-haired mystic who wrote "The Mysterious Stranger."

The three letters brought the suddenly ambitious Clemens $5 each. He had been working as a printer in Keokuk in the middle fifties, in his brother Orion's shop, but tiring of the routine and unromantic life of the rule, he decided to seek his fortune in South America, and, as an afterthought, arranged with the editor of the Post to contribute letters detailing his experiences on the way. Even at this early date he had a book in mind, a diary of his trip, or, as he phrased it,

"Snodgrass' Dierrea." The book did not materialize, but the idea remained. Some ten years later, after another journey, it resulted in "The Innocents Abroad."

One letter came from St. Louis and two from Cincinnati, which became the terminus of the projected trip to South America.

Clemens was approaching his twenty-first birthday when the first letter was printed. Nearly ten years was to elapse before the publication of "The Jumping Frog," the story that marked the beginning of his fame as a humorist. It was still later that the author considered he had made his "debut as a literary person" with his story of the burning of the Clipper ship Hornet, published in Harper's Magazine in December, 1866. His trip around the world followed, in 1867, and with the appearance of "The Innocents Abroad" his fame was secure. Thus the Snod-

grass letters occupy a unique place in Mark Twain's career as an author, and undoubtedly they had a definite influence on the selection of that career.

The Keokuk Daily Post in 1856 was a prosperous and enterprising newspaper. In addition to its daily four page edition it issued the Saturday Post, a weekly publication of some literary pretentions. The Snodgrass letters appeared in both the daily and Saturday issues under the head of correspondence and, it is to be assumed, were considered among the paper's banner contributions. The Saturday Post was the repository of stories scissored from "Peterson's Magazine" and other current periodicals, letters from correspondents, newspaper clippings from remote parts of the country, and a smattering of local news.

A curious hodge-podge of reading matter. One started perusal of a "fearful accident,"

apparently of local origin as date lines were not used, only to learn some place in the body of the article that the setting was Brooklyn or New Orleans. Correspondence on a diversity of themes was contributed by eager writers with fanciful names, from New England to California. "Our New England Correspondent" in particular had a fecund pen. He gave a philosophical twist to his budget of news and views from the northeast and posed as a prophet of the weather and other uncertain things.

Personal journalism was at its height. In commenting on the nefarious actions or lying statements of the editor of the opposition sheet, the pilot of the Post's destinies had no qualms or quavers in saying that his contemporary was under the influence of liquor. And liquor was liquor in those days. When the editor was waylaid on South Third street

by thugs, the attack, of course, was engineered by the rival newspaper. This attack was not mythical. It really occurred, and the Post's account of the editorial assault is one of the best pieces of unconscious humor that a newspaper searcher would care to read on a dull day. Here was the type of newspaper and the kind of journalism that Mark Twain was familiar with in the days when he was nearing or had just reached his majority.

Keokuk claims no small share in the career of the author. Florida, Mo., treasures his birthplace; Hannibal remembers the youthful Clemens, from whose life there came the experiences that went into Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn; Hartford, Conn., claims his later years, but the interest of Keokuk in the great white humorist is no less real or proprietory. There are his two years of resi-

dence, his Snodgrass letters, and last, but certainly not least, his first after dinner speech.

The old Clemens home still stands in the dam city; the building in which young Samuel helped set type for the Keokuk city directory of 1856 likewise is standing; a museum of Mark Twain relics has been placed in a room in this building by a prosaic insurance company which recently acquired the property, and many mementoes of the humorist are in the Keokuk Public Library. In the latter, for instance, one may find a complete set of Mark Twains works, imposingly austere in red leather, in a jealously guarded and perpetually locked bookcase marked "Keokuk Authors." There also are the files of the Post, containing the Snodgrass papers, and, probably most precious of all, the above-mentioned city directory, published by Samuel's brother, Orion.

In that directory did Samuel identify himself as a printer? By no means. You will find after his name the word ANTIQUARIAN, in capital letters. Samuel set it that way. The budding humorist was trying his hand.

To present a more detailed account of the biographical facts connected with the Snodgrass papers and the author's Keokuk experiences, the scene must shift to Hannibal, where Samuel, a youth in his teens, is setting type on Brother Orion's newspaper, the Journal. Even then the boy wanted to see the world, and after a quarrel with Orion, in 1853, he told his mother he was going to leave home and seek his fortune. He was then 18 years old. Thereupon he set out on a journey that lasted fifteen months and that took him to St. Louis, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, and other large cities. Like all wandering printers he earned his

way by setting type in newspaper offices along the way.

While Samuel was away, Orion's Journal failed, and the editor moved from Hannibal to Muscatine, Ia., where he bought a newspaper. It was to Muscatine, then, that the youthful wanderer turned for a reconciliation with the family after his eastern pilgrimage. Orion wished his brother to remain in Muscatine but the young man, still restless and believing that St. Louis offered better prospects, soon departed for the Missouri metropolis, where he worked in the composing room of the Evening News.

Meanwhile Orion had married and removed to Keokuk, and when Brother Sam came up from St. Louis for a visit, Orion offered him a job at $5 a week and board. Sam accepted. Orion's office was located on the third floor of 202 Main street, a build-

ing once occupied by a wholesale fruit concern, and now incorporated in the insurance company's plant. Henry Clemens and Dick Hingham were other employes of Orion's printing shop at that time. The office provided a sleeping room for Henry and Sam, and also a place to entertain Hingham and Edward Brownell, clerk in a bookshop on the first floor, who occasionally dropped in for an evening's chat.

Sam was a prodigious reader. He devoured everything on which he could lay his hands, and burned much midnight oil lying in bed with a book propped up on his knee and a pipe in his mouth. His ardor apparently was not extended to other occupations, for he seems to have had a reputation for laziness at this period.

Life in Keokuk, however, soon palled on the restless printer. This time it was South

America that struck his fancy. Stories of the survey of the upper Amazon by the Lynch and Herndon expedition brought visions of a fortune to be made from collecting cocoa in Brazil. Acting on one of the sudden impulses that characterized his life, he prepared for the long journey, went to St. Louis to bid good-bye to his mother, and then just as suddenly rushed back to Keokuk with a new idea in his head. He was friendly with the management of the Post, to which he broached the plan of sending travel letters to the paper to help pay his way.

George Rees, head of the Post, liked the idea well enough to offer $5 for each letter. This was not ill pay for that day, and Samuel, much pleased with the arrangement, made a fresh start.

The first Snodgrass letter is dated St. Louis, October 18, 1856 and was printed in the

Saturday Post of November 1. This letter may have been sent from St. Louis while Sam was there bidding good-bye to his mother, and may have served as an opening for his arrangement for later ones, but definite information on this point is lacking. Mr. Paine, apparently not knowing of the St. Louis letter, speaks only of two that came from Cincinnati, and indicates that the writer went to Cincinnati by way of Quincy, Chicago and Indianapolis on his second start, without again visiting St. Louis. This would support my deduction, but the matter is speculative.

At any rate the next communication is dated Cincinnati, November 14, was published in the Daily Post of November 29, and again in the Saturday Post of December 6. The third and last was written at Cincinnati, March 14, 1857, and published in the Daily

Post of April 10, 1857, and in the Saturday Post, April 18.

From Cincinnati Samuel had planned to proceed either to New York or New Orleans and then take boat for South America, but the trip was abandoned.

This ends the story of the Snodgrass letters, important at least as representing the earliest work of the humorist that has been preserved and the first for which he was paid.

Acknowledgment is made of generous aid from Edward Fountain Carter of Keokuk, who with pen and speech has entertained thousands with a wit and dry humor not unlike that of Mark Twain's. Mr. Carter is working on a history of Keokuk, which no doubt will bring to light many interesting facts concerning Mark Twain's sojourn there.

CHARLES HONCE

THE ADVENTURES OF THOMAS JEFFERSON SNODGRASS

I

The Keokuk Saturday Post
November 1, 1856

CORRESPONDENCE

Saint Louis, Oct. 18, 1856

MISTER EDITORS—

I want to enlighten you a leetle. I've been to the Theater—and I jest want to tell you how they do things down here to Saint Louis—the Mound City, as they call it, owin to its proximity to the Iron mountain and Pilot Knob.

Last night as I was a settin in the parlor of my Dutch boardin house in Fourth street (I board among the crouters so as to observe human natur in a forren aspeck) one of my hairy friends proposed that we mought as well go down and see Mr. Nealy play Julius Cesar. Now I had see Mr. Belding's Atheneum in Keokuk, and allers had a hankerin to get inside of it—so I told the Dutchman

(who is for all the world like other humans, eats like 'em, looks something like 'em, and drinks a good deal *more* like 'em) that I was anxious to patronize the Drammer.

We hadn't gone more'n about six squares till we come to a tremenjous dirt-colored house, with carraiges, and omnibuses, and niggers, and penut boys tearin around in front of it, indiscriminate like, and Dutch (I couldn't put in his name without using up too many of your type) said that was the place. We bought some green tickets and follered some fellers up nigh unto four hundred flights of stairs, and finally got into the concern, which was built into three or four round stories, with men and fiddlers in the first, along with a right smart chance of ragged boys, eatin penuts and cussin like militia majors. The second story had men and gals in it, and above there was nothing but masculine gen-

ders. We very naturally went into the second story, and got round where the side of the house (least ways I thought it was part of the house) was painted to represent *Alexandria, or Venice, or some other small village settin in the water.

Gee Whillikens! Mister Editors, if you could a been there jest then, you'd a thought that either old Gabriel had blowed his horn, or else there was houses to rent in that locality. I reckon there was nigh onto forty thousand people setting in that theatre—and sich an other fannin, and blowin, and scrapon, and gigglin, I hain't seen since I arrived in the United States. Gals! Bless your soul, there was gals there of every age and sex, from three months up to a hundred years, and every cherubim of 'em had a fan and an

*Alexandria, Missouri, a small river town a few miles south of Keokuk.

opery glass and a—tongue—probably two or three of the latter weepon, from the racket they made. No use to try to estimate the oceans of men and mustaches—the place looked like a shoe brush shop.

Presently, about a thousand fellers commenced hammerin on the benches and hollerin "Music," and then the fiddlers laid themselves out, and went at it like forty millions of wood sawyers at two dollars and a half a cord. When they got through the people hollered and stamped and whistled like they do at a demercratic meeting, when the speaker says something they don't understand. Well, thinks I, now I've got an old coarse comb in my pocket, and I wonder if it wouldn't take them one-hoss fiddlers down a peg and bring down the house, too, if I'd jest give 'em a tech of "Auld Lang Syne" on it. No sooner said than done, and out come the old

comb and a piece of paper to put on it. I "hem'd and haw'd" to attract attention, like, and commenced Doo-doo—do-doo—do-doo. "He, he, he," snickered the gals. "Ha, ha, ha," roared the mustaches. "Put him out." "Let him alone." "Go it, old Country." "Say, when did you get down?" and the devil himself couldn't a hearn that comb. I tell you now, I was riled. I throwed the comb at a little man that wasn't sayin nothin and ris right up. "Gentlemen and Ladies," says I, "I want to explain. I'm a peacable stranger from Keokuk, and my name is Thomas Jefferson Snodgrass—" "Go it, Snodgrass." "Oh, what a name." "Say, old Country, whar'd you get that hat?" Darn my skin if I wasn't mad. I jerked off my coat and jumped at the little man and, says I, "You nasty, sneakin degenerate great grandson of a ring-tailed monkey, I kin jest lam—" "Hold on

there, my friend, jest pick up your coat and follow me," says a military lookin gentleman with a club in his hand, tappin me on the shoulder. He was a police. He took me out and after I explained to him how St. Louis would fizzle out if Keokuk got offended at her, he let me go back, makin me promise not to make any more music durin the evening. So I let 'em holler their darndest when I took my seat, but never let on like I heard 'em.

Pretty soon a little bell rung, and they rolled up the side of the house with Alexandria on it, showin a mighty fine city, with houses, and streets, and sich, but nary a fire plug—all as natural as life. This was Rome. Then a lot of onery lookin fellers come a tearin down one of the streets, hurrayin and swingin their clubs, and said they were going to see Julius Cesar come into town. After this they shoved Rome out of the way, and

showed the inside of a splendid palace, they call it, and then some soldiers with bob-tailed tin coats on (high water coats we used to call 'em in Keokuk) come in, then some gals (with high water dresses on) and then some more soldiers, and so on, gals and soldiers and soldiers and gals, till it looked like all the Free Masons and Daughters of Temperance in the world had turned out. Finally Mr. Cesar hisself come in with a crown on, folks called it, but it looked to my unsofisticated vision like a hat without any crown about it. He had a little talk with Antony, durin which he was uncommon severe on a Mr. Cashus (who was a standin within three feet of him, but the derned fool didn't hear a word of it) reflectin on his personal appearance—saying he had a "lean and hungry look," which was mighty mean in him to say, though he was in fact, for the feller couldn't

a looked more like a shadder if he'd a boarded all his life at a Keokuk hotel. It's no use expatiating on every thing they done, so I'll jest mention a few of the things which I happened to see when the gal that sot in front of me took her turkey's tail head dress out of the way a minute to say somethin to the owner of an invisable mustash that had got wilted by coming out into the night air.

Arter a spell, a lot of fellers come out, along with Mr. Cashus, and they all laid their heads together like as many lawyers when they are gettin ready to prove that a man's heirs ain't got any right to his property. Presently Mr. Brutus come a marchin in as grand as a elephant in a menagerie of monkeys, and then the people stamped like Jehu. I kinda liked his looks. He 'peared like a man and a gentleman. The gal with the turkey's tail clapped her spy-glass to her eye,

and says, "Ther's Brutus—oh, what a mien he has." I didn't like that, so leanin forward, says I, "Madam, beggin your pardon, them other fellers is a consarned sight meaner'n him. There's that Cashus—" "Hold your tongue, sir," yelled the wilted mustasch—and in half a second there was enough double-barrelled opery glasses leveled at me to a blowed me into chunks no bigger'n a mustard seed if they'd only been loaded. Rememberin the music scrape, I dried up and kept quiet, letten the fellers in the lower story holler at me as much as they wanted. Dr. H. had been settin purty close to me, and I thought I'd get him to explain this time, but I found he'd gone out between the acts to see a intimate friend, and hadn't got back yet.

Cashus and the other fellers was for killin Cesar and makin sausage meat of him cause they couldn't be kings and emperors while he

was alive, but Brutus didn't like that way of doin the thing—he jist wanted to kill him like a christian, jist for the good of Rome. Then the people stomped again. It 'peared to me kind of curus that they should kick up sich a noise every time any body raved around and ripped out somethin hifalutin, but went half asleep when anybody was tellin about poor Cesar's virtues.

Arter that, Misses Brutus come out when the other fellars was gone, and like Mr. Clennam at the Circumlocution Office, she "wanted to know." But it warn't no use—Brutus warn't going to publish jest then, and it 'pears that wimmin was the only newspapers they had in those days. You see all them fellers was conspirators, got together to conspirit a little again Cesar, and Brutus didn't consider it healthy to tell the secret to *everybody*. (Mr. Editors, as I'm acquainted with a right

smart chance of gals in Keokuk, why, if it's jest as convenient, I'd ruther you wouldn't send your paper only to the men, this week.)

At last it come time to remove Mr. Cesar from office, like they say the Buchaneers are going to do the Fremonsters—extinguish him entirely,—so all the conspirators got around the throne, and directly Cesar come steppin in, putting on as many airs as if he was mayor of Alexandria. Arter he had sot on the throne awhile they all jumped on him at once like a batch of Irish on a sick nigger. He fell on the floor with a percussion that would a made him feel like he'd been ridin bare back on a Keokuk livery stable horse for a month, if he'd lived. When he drapped, the turkey-tailed gal flinched, and grunted a sympathetic "ugh," and everybody in the neighborhood laughed at her. But it wasn't the gal's fault—she had for once got wrapped up in

the play, and I spose that was the only part she entirely comprehended, cause I seen her slip down in the street the other day.

Finally, the play was done, and I reached over to the wilted mustache, and says I: "Squire, can you tell me what Mr. Cesar's agoin to play next?" He wheeled hisself around sudden, and says he: "Don Cesar—he be damn'd, sir." "Oh, gracious sakes, don't swear so hard," says I, horrerfied. "I ain't swearin," says he, and he pinted out the play on the bill of fare—"I said Don Cesar de Bazan, sir." I seen through it, then, in a minnit, so I told him it was sufficient—no apologies wasn't necessary.

I changed my seat now, and took a pew in front, so I could see plumb back into the kitchen of the concern, if they should take away the cities and woods and things. Proppin my feet up on the railin, I thought I'd take

it comfortable like. Jest then, them fellers in the pit, as they call it (and I guess, Mr. Editors, some of 'em 'll get into a dern sight deeper pit than that, afore you git to heaven) went to hollerin "Boots. Boots. Boots." like all natur. Thinks I, that's fun, and I went to hollerin too, though I didn't know what it meant. When I got at it they all pitched in louder'n ever, and that gal like to a shook all her tail feathers out a laughin. Dutch says to me, "Take your feet down, you dern ledderhet, it's you vot makes all dish fuss." Dang my buttons if I wasn't a rarin and chargin when I found they was makin fun of me, and I ris right up, puttin my hat on the extreme side of my head, and stickin my thums in the armholes of my vest, and commenced a little oration, so—"Gentlemen and Ladies—I'm a peacable stranger from Keokuk, and my name is Thomas Jefferson—"

"Put him out." "Hurrah for old Keokuk." "Go it, Snodgrass," yelled the purgatory fellers, and in a twinklin a couple of police had sot me down in the street, advisin me to go to the devil and not come back there any more. Now, Mister Editors, Saint Louis may fizzle out and be derned.

Yours, with lacerated feelins,

THOMAS JEFFERSON SNODGRASS.

THE ADVENTURES OF THOMAS JEFFERSON SNODGRASS

II

The Keokuk Daily Post

Saturday Morning, Nov. 29, 1856

FOR THE POST

Snodgrass' Ride on the Railroad

Cincinnati, Nov. 14, 1857

Mister Editors—

Well, now, dang me skin if I don't feel rather curus, "so far from home and all them that's dear to me," as the bordin-school gals say the first time they write to their friends —still, I ain't takin on about it to speak of —all the difference I kin see is, I feel a little more religious, maybe, when I get a little sick, than I used to.

You know arter going down there to St. Louis, and seein so many wonderful things, I wanted to see more—so I took a notion to go a travelin, so as to see the world, and then write a book about it—a kind o daily journal

like—and have all in gold on the back of it, "Snodgrass' Dierrea", or somethin of that kind, like other authors that visits forren parts. I couldn't keep still so at last I went and got a map, so as to find out the shortest way to Cincinnati, and after examining of it keerfully, I come to the conclusion that about the best way was to go back to Keokuk, and from Keokuk to Quincy, and from Quincy to Chicago, and from Chicago to Indianapolis, and then down to the end of my ultimate destination. And the result of it all is that I am here, safe and sound, and I would recommend everybody to take the same road, and derned if they won't see sights.

Now, as I'm going to say somethin about this voyage, I guess I'll commence at Keokuk, bein as that's the general startin pint of the inhabitants of North America. I went down one night to the railroad office there,

purty close onto the *Laclede House, and bought about a quire of yaller paper, cut up into tickets—one for each railroad in the United States, I thought, but I found out arterwards, that the Alexandria and Boston airline was left out—and then got a baggage feller to take my trunk down to the boat, where he spilled it out on the levee, bustin it open and shakin out the contents, consisting of "guides" to Chicago, and "guides" to Cincinnati, and travelers guides, and all kinds of sich books, not excepting a "guide to heaven," which last aint much use to a fellar in Chicago, I kin tell you. Finally, that thar fast packet quit ringing her bell, and started down the river—but she hadn't gone mor'n a mile, till she run clean up on top of a sand bar, whar she stuck till plum one o'clock, spite of the Captain's swearin,—and they had to set the

*An old Keokuk hotel.

whole crew to cussin at last, afore they got her off. That sand bar was a aggravating thing, anyhow, as we was runnin a race with an old fellar with a carpet bag, who calculated it was good exercise to walk to Quincy, and he got about half a day's start of us. However, when we did get off, you ought to a seen that old steamboat slinging sand with them wheels of hern. She'd got her Irish up now, and din't keer a scratch for bars and nothin else—and away she went walkin down the river on four inches of water, and jumpin over three acre patches of dry land, jest as though she had legs. The old man and her had a mighty tight race of it, and she only saved herself by takin a nigh cut across the bottom, comin in fifteen minutes ahead. We had to get off the boat here, and go in the omnibuses to the cars. My fare down to Quincy was a dollar and a quarter, and por-

terage about four dollars and a half, which is mighty moderate, and people oughtn't to complain, for though the packet company makes money, they can't afford to hire porters at ten dollars a month, and no reasonable human being could expect to have his overcoat keerfully preserved into the baggage room, while he's eating dinner, without payin a quarter for it—it's worth nine cents a minit.

When we got to the depo, I went around to get a look at the iron hoss. Thunderation. It wasn't no more like a hoss than a meetin house. If I was going to describe the animule, I'd say it looked like—derned if I know *what* it looked like, unless it was a regular old hedevil, snortin fire and brimstone out of his nostrils, and puffin out black smoke all round, and pantin, and heavin, and swellin, and a chawin up red hot coals like they was good. A feller stood in a little house like, feedin

him all the time, but the more he got the more he wanted, and the more he blowed and snorted. After a spell the feller catched him by the tail, and great Jericho, he set up a yell that split the ground more'n a mile and a half and the next minit I felt my legs a waggin, and found myself at t'other end of the string of vehickles. I wasn't *skeered*, but I had three chills and a stroke of palsy in less than five minutes, and my face had a curus brownish-yaller-green-bluish color in it, which was perfectly unaccountable.

"Well," says I, "comment is super-*flu*-ous." And I took my seat in the nearest wagin, or car, as they call it—a consarned great long steamboat-lookin thing with a string of little pews down each side, big enough to hold about a man and a half. Jest as I sat down the hoss hollered twice, and started off like a streak, pitchin me head first at the stomach

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of a big Irish woman, and she give a tremenjus grunt and then ketched me by the head and crammed me under the seat, and when I got out and staggered to another seat, the cars was a jumpin and tearin along at nigh unto forty thousand miles an hour and everybody was a bobbin up and down like a mill saw, and every wretch of 'em had his mouth stretched wide open and looked like they was a laffin, but I couldn't hear nothin, the cars kept sich a racket.

Bimeby they stopped all at once, and then sich a laff busted out of them passengers as I never hearn before. Laffin at *me* too, that's what made me mad, and I was mad as thunder, too. I ris up, and shakin my fist at 'em, says I, "Ladies and gentlemen, look a here, I'm a peaceable stranger—" and away went the train, went like the small pox was in town, jerkin me down in the seat with a whack like

I'd been thrown from the moon, and their cussed mouths flopped open and the fellers went to bobbin up and down again. I put on an air of magnanimous contempt like, and took no more notice of 'em and very naturally went to bobbin up and down myself.

I jest took a peep out of the winder, and drat my buttons, if I wasn't astonished at the way that rail road was a gittin over the ground. I tell you, Mr. Editors, it made a rail fence look like a fine tooth comb, and the air actually turned blue in the vicinity. Thinks I if that devil at the other end of the train's going home tonight, it won't take him long to get there. Bimeby the second clerk came a staggerin in hollerin "Tickets. Tickets." When he came to me I told him I wasn't going to stop—I was going to Chicago. "Well, give me your ticket." "Not by a derned sight," says I. "You can't come any o them tricks on

me, old feller. You can't get my ticket and then stick me ashore at the first wood yard your old cook stove stops at." First he got mad, and then he got tickled, but when he found he wasn't making much, he like to a skeered me to death, threatening to throw me overboard —so I yielded in a condescending manner, and traded my yaller ticket for a red one, which wasn't Sunday school fashion, where you get ten red tickets for one of tother color. Arter that, he made a regular practice of comin in every two minutes hollerin "Tickets." It's my opinion he's a darn nuisance, and ought to be turned out of the company. If a feller was to travel on that road for a week, that clerk and the peanut boy would pester him to death between 'em.

It didn't take me long to git used to the cars, and then I begun to put on airs like an old traveler—stickin my feet over the back

of the next pew, puttin my ticket in my hat band, pretending to go to sleep, and so on, and never lettin on to keer a cent where we was going to. So, when a feller asked me if I thought we would the connection, not wantin to appear green, I told him "No, dern the connection," but I couldn't imagin what that "connection" meant, no how. Another feller asked me what was the next town, and I told him Chicago. (I didn't know the name of any other place on the road, and I had to tell him somethin, to keep up appearances), and the blasted fool got off there. Served him right—he'd no business going so far away from home without havin his mother along. At last, after skimmin over a pooty big "arm" of Lake Michigan, they call it—where I couldn't see nothin solid for the cars to rest on—we got to that place Chicago, which they say is Old Nick's local agency

for the world. The cars run into a tremendous house, about as big as *Warsaw, and as soon as they stopped, mor'n three hundred fellers come a cracking their whips around and hollering: "Baggage for the Massasoit House" and "Carriages for United States Hotel" and "Passengers for the Little Miami Railroad," "Here's carriage for G'lena 'n Sh'cago Railroad," "Gentlemen going east take Suth'n Mish'gan Indianan Railroad," and so on, every feller hollering as loud as the very Dickens would let him. Directly a feller commenced yellin "This way, gentlemen. This way with your checks. This way." Then another feller commenced grabbin up trunks and looking at a brass thing hangin to 'em, and hollerin out the number he found on it—then as soon as some feller in the crowd would hand in a number like it, he'd

*Warsaw, Illinois, five miles south of Keokuk.

slam the trunk down with all his might in the depo—and he was a pooty strong feller too.

"Two hundred and forty-two, Nor'n cross," "Here—242" (Slam goes the trunk.) "Nine hundred and sixty-eight, G'lena and Chicago." "968." "Four hundred an thirty-seven, Ill'noy central." "All right 437." "Say, let that baggage alone." "Where's my hat?" "Oh, thunder, who's seen my wife?" "Gentlemen goin south take seats in the train at the far side of depo—going east, take seats in cars on middle track." "Put down that trunk—b'longs to Mishigan Central." "You'r a liar." "You'r another," and away they go at it, pitchin into each other like dogs, till the depo police pitches into them and takes 'em off to the watch house.

Now its amusin to notice how keerful them fellers is with baggage (that's a kind

of sarcastified remark—understand). I see 'em knock a hole in the floor—3 inch oke plank—with a trunk not much bigger'n a carpet sack—and that's a unpolished fact. I shivered there considerable of a spell, waitin for my baggage, and finally got the bottom half of my trunk, what had the check on it, and bimeby my vallis made its appearance, with shirts and cravats hangin out at one end, and socks and collars at t'other—lookin considerable like a Irishman that's jest got out of a New Orleans 'lection riot—and dern my cats if I'd a knowd it was a vallis at all, only for a piece of my name what got left on the end of it, (by mistake, I spose) for it didn't look no more like that article than a steembote. After I got the balance of my trunk, I shoved out for the Massasawit House, and put up for a spell.

I know it's fashionable to describe hotels, and tell how much they cost, but I reckon it aint necessary for me to do so—specially as I don't know nothin about that hotel, only—they charge enuff. Chicago's a great place, but I ain't going to say nothin about it, only jest this, that when you feel like tellin a feller to go to the devil, tell him to go to Chicago—it'll anser every purpose, and is perhaps, a leetle more expensive.

Next day I started for Cincinnati—and as this letter is growed pooty long, I'll only say that there's more blacksmith shops in Indiana than anywhere else in the world, and I calculate we stopped at every dern one there was in the whole state. The cars would run about three hundred yards, and holler and stop—and so on till we got to Indianapolis, and took the midnight thunder-an-ligtnin train, and arter that we come a tearin down here at the

rate of four hundred and thirty-seven miles a minute, leavin the rail track red hot behind us—in some places it melted.

Your's, what's left of me.

SNODGRASSS.

This letter also was printed in the Keokuk Saturday Post of December 6, 1856

THE ADVENTURES OF
THOMAS JEFFERSON
SNODGRASS

III

The Keokuk Daily Post
April 10, 1857

CORRESPONDENCE

WRITTEN FOR THE KEOKUK POST

SNODGRASS, IN A ADVENTURE

Cincinnati, March 14, 1857

MISTER EDITORS:—

It mought be that some people think your umble sarvent has "shuffled off this mortal quile" and bid an eternal adoo to this subloonary atmosphere—nary time. He aint dead, but sleepeth. That expreshun are figerative, and go to signerfy that he's pooty much quit scribblin.

It's been cold here, Mr. Editors. And when I asserts that fact, people can take it for granted I mean its been mighty nasty particler cold—a considerable sight colder'n coffee at the seckond table. Fust it snowed, and

snowed, and snowed, tell you actilly couldn't see the mud in the streets. Next it kivered up and blotted out the sines, and continued on tell all the brick houses looked like the frame ones, and visy versy—and at last, when it did stop, you couldn't a told Cincinnati from the Rocky Mountains in January. The Ohio river was friz to the bottom—which warn't no great shakes in the freezing line, considering that krick aint never got more'n forty barls of water in it, no how—and the steamboats were friz to the airth, and the Dutch was friz to the sour-kraut kegs, and the preachers was friz to ther parsonages, and somehow I think the Devil hisself got ketched and had to winter in the durned uncomfortable town.

Well, in course, coal went up and fires went down. People couldn't neither beg, nor steal, nor borry the preshus truck—and buyin was clean out of the question, seein that they

asked seventeen cents an ounce for it, and not keerin much about sellin it anyhow. Things got to sich a pass that the poor porshuns of the sitizens wanted the Mayor to discontinuer the use of the steam fire injuns, cause when a house would conflaggerate, them eternal noosances would drowned it out afore they could git warm. Gold dust warnt worth no more'n coal dust, and in course the blasted Jews got to adulterating the fuel. They mixed it up half and half—a tun of coal dust to a tun of ground pepper, and sold it for the genuine article. But they ketched them at it at last, and they do say that some of the indignant inhabitants took a hoss whip and castigated one of 'em till he warn't fit to assoshiate with Jeemes Gordon Bennett hisself.

After a spell, the City Council concluded to try ther hand at relievin the sufferin community. Thy laid in a stock of coal, and ad-

vertised to sell cheap and to poor devils only. But it was curus to see how the speckalation worked. Here's a instance. A indigent Irish woman—a widow with nineteen children and several at the breast, accordin to custom, went to the Mayor to get some of that public coal. The Mayor he gin her an order on the Marshal; the Marshal gin her an order on the Recorder; Recorder sent her to the Constable; Constable sent her to the Postmaster; Postmaster sent her to the County Clerk, and so on, tell she run herself half to death, and friz the balance, while she had sixteen places to go yet, afore she could git the coal. But that is only just half of the little circumstance. You see that widder had been trotting after Recorders and Postmasters and sich for considerable more'n a good while—and the Curoner's jury that sot on her scraped up the orders she'd got and sold 'em to the paper

mill at three cents a pound, clearin about four dollars and a half by the speculation. Now only think what a mercantile education mought a done for the unfortunit daughter of Eve. (I say "daughter of Eve," meanin it as kinder figerative or poetastical like, for I forgit, now, whether the Irish come from our Eve, or not.)

I reckon I orter tell you about the little adventer I had tother night, but drat if it don't work me worse'n castor oil just to think of it.

I was a santerin up Walnut street, feelin pooty nice, and hummin to myself that good old Metherdis hymn I learnt at class meetin in Keokuk, commencin:

"Boston isn't in Bengal,
And flannel drawers aint made of tripe;
Lobsters don't wear specs at all,
And cows don't smoke the German pipe,"

when a young lady with a big basket birsted in on my revery. "I say, mister," says she, "is your name—" "Snodgress," says I, wonderin how on airth she knowed me. "The very man I wanted to see," says she. "The dev—dickens," says I. "Yes, and I've always hearn you was sich a good, kind feller, that I allers wanted to have a talk with you." "By jings, madam, I am glad to hear you talk so. I'm just as much at your service as if I was your own grandmother." "Yes, you'r just the man, and now I've got something to tell you. But bless my life (lookin skeered), I've left my portmoney in the grocery around the corner. If you would please to hold my basket tell I go and git it, Mr. Snobrags, I'll never forget you." "With the all-firedest pleasure in the world, madam—but Snodgrass," says I, correctin her as I took the big basket. And away she went around the corner, leavin me as

happy as a dog with two tails. Thinks I, I'll galant that gal home, and then (she's already struck with my personal appearance) she'll ask me to come again—spect she's rich as a Jew. No doubt the old man'll take a likin to me (changing the heavy basket to tother arm) and he'll ask me to call around. In course I'll come, and come often, too, and when about a dozen of that gal's sweethearts find me a shinin up so numerous they'll get mad and after a spell they'll challenge me (changin the basket again). I'll jest take 'em across the river to Kaintuck and shoot 'em down like pole cats. That'll fetch the old man. He'll think I'm the devil hisself. He'll come and tel me how many banks and railroads he owns, and ask me to marry his darter. And I'll do it—but hold on—by the eternal smash, where's that gal took herself off to? Seems to me she's having a arful chase

arter that portmoney of her's. So I shove out arter her, which was dern sensible, considerin she'd been gone a hour and a half.

Pooty soon there commenced the eternalist, confoundest, damnationist kickin in that basket, follered by the eternalist, confoundest squallin that you ever heard on. I run to the gas lamp and jerked off the kiver, and there was the ugliest, nastiest, oneriest he-baby I ever seed in all my life. "Sold, by Jeminy. Dern the baby. Oh Lordy, Lordy, Lordy," says I, blubberin like a three-year-old. "Dang yer skin, don't make sich a racket."

But it wouldn't do to stand there with that basket full of baby lungs, raisin the devil and the perlice all over the neighborhood. So I gathered up the traps and broke for home like a quarter-hoss, cussin at every jump and mixin it up with what the woman said, and grittin my teeth like a tobbacker worm. "Often

hearn of me — lost her portmoney — kind, good man." O Lordy, Snodgrass, you're a fool. "Never forget me." Wish to jeewhillikins I could forget her. O Lordy, what'll I do with the baby? Snodgrass, you're a blasted, eternal, onmitigated fool." And so I ranted and cussed tell I got home to my own room.

Then the thing quit hollerin and I locked the door. Becomin a leetle composed, I took the tongs and lifted the critter out of the basket, so as to get a good look at it. Well, the varmint kept so quiet that it kinda fooled me, and I thought I might ventur on makin a face at it, throwin my hands up like claws and makin a leetle small jump at it, jest by way of revenge, you know. Now right thar is where Snodgrass missed it. Sich a yell as skeered animals sot up — shucks, a shiveree wasn't nothing longside it. In course I had to grab it, to keep it from wakin the dead before

Resurrection Day, and I walked it, and tossed it, and cussed it, till the sweat run off my carcass to the amount of a barl at least. O Lordy, warn't I in agony of sufferin?

"Sh-h-h," says I, tossin the brat, "there now, there, there, your mother is coming (singing a leetle occasionally); 'ockey by baby, in the tree top, when the wind blows—there now, poor little dear—when the wind blows—oh, darn your everlastin yaller skin, won't you never dry up?" But it wasn't no go. The baby wouldn't quit cryin, so I sot baby, basket and all under the bed and piled old clothes on 'em, tell I was pooty certin the cretur wouldn't freeze, if it didn't smuther, and I turned in.

Well, Mr. Editors, it's no use harryin up my feelings by dwellin on the onpleasant epox of my kareer, therefore I'll jest mention that arter standing guard over that infant all the

next day to keep the sarvent girls from gettin a sight of it, I was ketched by a perliceman about midnight down to the river, trying to poke the dang thing through a hole in the ice. They raised the dickins about it the day arter. The crowd in the court room let out their opinyons pooty free, and I tell ye I was riled when I hearn a young lady say that "the poor innocent little cherub ort to be put out of the reach of its onnateral father." "Onnateral, thunder," says I, bustin out all at wunst. "Fine the prisoner ten dollars for contempt of court," yells the judge. "Fine and be—" but they didn't let me finish. They lugged me off and locked me up, and never let me out till I promised—

No, sir I swar I wont' tell what I promised them sharks. But twixt you and me somethin dark's goin to happen. It pears to me that that baby'll larn to swim yit afore its

six weeks older—pervided it don't perish in the attempt.

I reckon I'll bid you adoo, now, Mister Editors, and go on tryin to find out the meanin of the verse that says: "Of such is the kingdom of Heaven," and several other passyges. "Onnateral father," dern my skin, I wish I war, well, never mind.

Yours, et cetery,

SNODGRASS.

The foregoing also was printed in the Keokuk Saturday Post of April 18, 1857

A CELEBRATED VILLAGE IDIOT

by JAMES O'DONNELL BENNETT

Mr. Bennett, staff member of the Chicago Tribune, recently visited Keokuk in the course of a jaunt through "Chicagoland," that vast midwestern territory of which the city by the inland sea is the metropolis. His story of that visit is embodied in the following illuminating sketch, which throws new facets of light on that eccentric personage, Orion Clemens, called by Mr. Bennett "a celebrated village idiot." The sketch is published with permission of Mr. Bennett and The Tribune.

A CELEBRATED VILLAGE IDIOT

"Mother," said one of Mrs. Felix Hughes' sons on an evening when we were sitting together on the heights that overlook the great river at Keokuk, "just what was Orion Clemens' occupation when he lived here?"

Mrs. Hughes, mother of rampant, romantic, rebel Rupert and of Felix the singer, and of Howard the now gone inventor, replied in her tentative way, "Why, he was a kind of a lawyer, wasn't he?"

Felix the singer laughed and patted the lady's hand. "Mother," says he, "you've hit it. That's just the kind of a lawyer he was!"

From Hannibal to Muscatine, which is 120 miles as the crow flies, you hear more stories about Orion Clemens, who was Mark Twain's elder brother, than you hear about

Chief Keokuk or Mr. Justice Miller, Keokuk lawyer, whom President Lincoln appointed to the United States Supreme court and whom men called "the greatest constitutional lawyer since Joseph Story," or even about Mark himself.

Orion died 29 years ago, but his memory, like many of his intellectual stirrings, still is green. Old men will say to you as you yarn along with them about him, "He was the darndest fool and the honestest man I ever knew!"

He lived in several towns along the west bank of the river, and in each and every one of them he became the crowned specimen of village idiot. But village philosopher and village helper also; at everybody's beck and call, and as printer, editor, lawyer, chicken raiser, and what not — mostly what not — more eager to serve mankind free than for

price. He could write, too; helped Mark in the composition of "Roughing It," and was a fluent, forcible speaker.

The keenest deprivation Mark Twain inflicted on a world that treated him well was not putting Orion into a book. Orion was willing, and once, only a few days before his death in Keokuk, knowing the general scheme of a tale his brother had on the stocks, he wrote him, "I would fit in as a fool character." Then he went on to sketch the kind of fool he was, but not all fool, he pleaded, and offered this precious passage in extenuation of many fooleries:

> "When a farmer took my father's offer for some chickens 'under advisement' till the next day, I said to myself, 'Would Napoleon Bonaparte have taken under advisement till the next day an offer to sell him some chickens?'"

For putterers — like me — there is sharp chastisement in that.

One of the classic Keokuk stories about Orion concerns the written report he made when he was treasurer of the Congregational church. Big Bill Sage of the State Central Savings bank and the Iowa State Insurance Company Mutual — second oldest insurance company west of the Mississippi; founded 1855 — told it to me and swears it's true. 'Tis short.

Orion rose in meeting and submitted his annual report as church treasurer. It ran:

"Receipts, $1,827.34.

"Expenditures, $1,798.76.

"Balance, $28.58.

"Ain't got it. Must have spent it."

Another time Orion's wife, going away for the day, warned him she was leaving his mid-day meal on a plate in the pantry. She also

left on a lower shelf a pan of dough that was to rise in due time.

Returning at night she asked, "Did you find your lunch?"

"Yep."

"Was it all right?"

"Yep — except, well, it seemed kind of heavy?"

Once Orion, financed by Mark, started a chicken farm in Keokuk, selling to the citizenry for $1.25 a pair fowls that it cost $1.60 a pair to raise. The experiment lasted two years, at the end of which it had cost Mark $6,000. Then he closed out and shut up.

I said Mark never put moony, dreamy, loony, fanciful, saintly Orion in a book. Well, he did sketch him in one — his posthumous "Autobiography" — and the sketching, which starts at page 258 of the second volume of that vagrant work and is resumed in 6-page

lots from time to time, is beautifully and tenderly and yet most comically done.

"In all my seventy years," says the younger brother concerning Orion's personality, "I have not met a twin of it. . . . One of his characteristics was eagerness. He woke with eagerness about some matter or other every morning; it consumed him all day; it perished in the night. . . . Throughout his long life he was always trading religions and enjoying the change of scenery. . . . Except in the matter of grounded principles he was as unstable as water. . . It had been his habit for a great many years to change his religion with his shirt. . . . He never lost a cent for anybody, and never made one for himself. . . . And he was beloved all his life in whatsoever community he lived."

Orion married a Keokuk girl after she had given walking papers to a Quincy, Ill., girl to

whom Orion had simultaneously engaged himself. About the wife Mark once released this gem: "She was a good woman, but her vanity was pretty large and inconvenient."

The value of Orion—name pronounced by our Keokuk neighbors, and by the Clemens family, with the accent on the first syllable instead of on the second as in the name of the constellation for which he was christened—the value of him, I think, to us lovers of letters and of human nature is that he was Mark himself in caricature, and caricature, as Miss Cissie Loftus and Miss Elsie Janis have often shown us, is a valid and valuable method of criticism—literary or otherwise.

There is a Mark Twain shrine in Keokuk. Big Bill Sage, who affects to be a fifteen minute egg — hard as that — devised it when he and Judge Logan had to remodel and enlarge the old building at 202 Main street in which

Orion and Mark were setting type, 70 years ago. In the handsome directors' room of the remodeled structure Mr. Sage — do you catch that "Mister," Brother William? —Mr. Sage has hung the priceless portrait in oils of Mark which shows him at the age of 22. In it he wears a winged collar, and a stock, and auburn locks, and side whiskers! The face that later became so leonine is here heavy and stodgy.

On the third floor of the building, near the spot where Mark used to set type, are displayed the printer's case at which the great man worked and his composing stick, and over the case hangs, framed, that withering interview on Theodore Roosevelt, which he gave The Chicago Tribune in March, 1908 —the blast containing the phrase, "this showy charlatan" and prophesying what the colonel, whom Mark loathed, would do "after he has done hunting other wild animals heroically in

Africa with the safeguards of a park of artillery and the advertising equipment of a brass band."

However, we must push on from Keokuk, although I could write another piece about it which I think would interest you — so many interesting people and things did I encounter there. But The Tribune's last admonition to me was, "Now, don't settle in any of these towns, nor disappear, the way you did in Roumania."